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City of Salisbury and Salisbury Fire Department Issue Update Regarding 1910 S. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Fire

Salisbury, NC_March 8, 2008 – Chief Bob Parnell, speaking on behalf of the City of Salisbury, stated that today the focus for the Salisbury Fire Department is “on family and facts”. This news comes on the heels of the tragic loss of life experienced in response to the Friday, March 8, early morning structure fire at 1910 S. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.; Salisbury Lumber Company.

In an official 3 pm press conference, held at Salisbury City Hall on Friday, Chief Parnell confirmed the loss of two of Salisbury’s bravest firefighters. Those identified by the Chief as lost in the tragedy were:

- Firefighter I, Victor A. Isler, age 40. Isler was a past FDNY member/paramedic. Isler had been in the company of the SFD for less than one year.
- A Part-time Salisbury Firefighter I, Justin Edward Monroe, age 19, who also served as a Spencer Firefighter and as a Lieutenant with the Millers Ferry Volunteer Fire Department. Monroe was currently pursuing a degree in Fire Science Technology at Central Piedmont Community College.

Locally, investigations into the origin and cause of the fire continue by the Salisbury Police and Fire Departments, and the Rowan County Sheriff’s Department. Other agencies assisting include a national response team dispatched from the Federal Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), the State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) and officials of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (O.S.H.A.), Department of Labor.

Charlotte II Field Office Supervisor, Randy Biggs said that this investigation is “the number one Priority for the Charlotte Field Division of ATF”. In addition to ATF staff serving on the National Response Team, are representatives from the ATF Intelligence Operations Division and Public Information Support. This regional response brings nearly fifty individuals to this fire investigation. Salisbury Chief Bob Parnell explained, “Their (ATF’s) primary role is to support the law enforcement investigation currently underway and to find the answers to the many questions related to this fire.”

Chief Parnell continues, "It is standard procedure in incidents involving the loss of life and significant property damage, for this to be treated as a criminal investigation. As such, the Salisbury Fire Department is turning over all pertinent records to the investigating agencies. When appropriate, the information can be shared with the community."

To support the families of the two fallen firefighters, the City of Salisbury and the Salisbury Fire Department will establish a fund to aid their families. The Bank of North Carolina, with branches in both Salisbury and Harrisburg, will serve as the repository for these tax-deductible donations. A link to the Bank of North Carolina website will be available to web users by early next week, via the City of Salisbury website, www.salisburync.gov. Mayor Susan Kluttz, speaking on behalf of the Salisbury City Council shares, "I am overwhelmed by the tremendous outpouring of community support and resources for the Salisbury Fire Department and the families of our fallen firefighters. I never cease to be amazed by the love and generosity of our citizens, especially in a time such as this." Mayor Kluttz added, "The appropriate level of public safety response from all agencies has been reassuring. I wish I could thank these men and women of emergency services personally who are stepping up in our time of need."

Chief Parnell also reported today that Captain Rick A. Barkley, a 20-year veteran with the Salisbury Fire Department, who experienced first and second degree burns to his back and extremities has been released and is recuperating at home.

Salisbury Fire Department Chaplain Dan Peters, working in conjunction with the NC Fallen Firefighters Foundation (www.ncfff.org), will offer red ribbons to attendees following today's 4 pm media briefing at Salisbury Fire Station #1, 514 E. Innes Street. Peters explains, "These ribbons, received through an anonymous donation to the NC Fallen Firefighters Foundation, will serve as a reminder to fellow firefighters, citizens and the community that our two fallen brothers will not be forgotten." Complimentary ribbons will be available to citizens at the fire station address above and at participating local establishments. A location of these sites will be made available on the City website at www.salisburync.gov by early next week.

As the City of Salisbury and the Salisbury Fire Department work through this tragedy, we continue to be grateful for your prayers and respect for our firefighters.

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